Two Comments on Bp. Tissier's Recent Interview

Rev. Anthony Cekada

Two points in Bp. Bernard Tissier de Mallerais's interview with Stephen Heiner (*The Remnant*, 30 April 2006) deserve some further comment.

1. Abp. Lefebvre and the New Rite of Episcopal Consecration. Bp. Tissier emphatically denies that Abp. Lefebvre ever studied, denied, doubted or even discussed the validity of the new rite of episcopal consecration.

All I can say is that Bp. Tissier was not in the room when Abp. Lefebvre personally told me the form for the new rite had been completely changed and that he regarded it as invalid.

Perhaps such issues didn't worry Bp. Tissier, so he didn't ask. But they sure worried me.

I stand by the account of my conversation with Abp. Lefebvre that I gave in my article "Absolutely Null and Utterly Void." The Archbishop told me the rite was invalid.

But in any event, this is a sideshow. The validity of the rite is not determined by a dead Archbishop's opinions, but by applying the principles of Catholic sacramental theology.

2. Benedict XVI's Heresies. Bp. Tissier's strong language about Ratzinger will strike many traditionalists as some sort of fundamental change of position.

This, I fear, is not the case.

Bp. Tissier's insistence that Ratzinger's heresies have no effect on whether or not he is a true pope is itself remarkably similar to Ratzinger's *own* heresies about the Church: that (1) the denial of Catholic teaching through heresy does not truly put one outside the Church of Christ, and that (2) one may be a member of the Church of Christ without being subject to the Roman Pontiff.

As regards (1), according to Bp. Tissier, Ratzinger "has professed heresies in the past… he has never retracted his errors… he published a book full of heresies."

But none of this, it seems, affects Ratzinger's membership in the Church or his capacity to become and remain the Vicar of Christ: "No, no, no no. He is the Pope…" Heresy, in Bp. Tissier's system, simply has *no consequences* for the individual professing it.

As regards (2), even though Bp. Tissier says of Ratzinger "he is the Pope, now, yes, he is the Pope," SSPX refuses to be subject to "the Pope" while at the same time considering itself part of the Church. Submission to the Roman Pontiff, in Bp. Tissier's system as in Ratzinger's, is no longer necessary for membership in the Church of Christ.

It is ironic that by coupling a denunciation of Ratzinger's heresies with insisting that this has *no effect* on either Ratzinger's membership in the Church or capacity to be a true pope, Bp. Tissier inadvertently embraces Ratzinger's great "church-as-communion" heresy.

Obviously this is not Bp. Tissier's intention.

One can always pray, however, that having acknowledged that Ratzinger taught heresy, Bp. Tissier and other members of SSPX will soon apply to that fact the appropriate theological principles and then unflinchingly acknowledge the logical consequences: the heretic Ratzinger cannot be a true pope.

In the meantime, denouncing Ratzinger's heresies while insisting he is a pope merely crystallizes the incoherence of SSPX's "recognize-and-resist" ecclesiology.

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